

Group W TV Stations Gobble Up Local Angles From 'Newsfeed'

Group W is starting to show results in its attempt to punch up the newscasts in its five major markets with satellite feeds of local-angled stories extracted from events occurring throughout the U.S.

That's the word from Richard Sabreen, v.p. of tv-news operations for the Group W stations, who says that, after more than three weeks of operation, "Newsfeed," as the Group W service is called, has, among other things:

— given WJZ-TV Baltimore and KDKA-TV Pittsburgh exclusive, highly-promotable footage of hostages and hostage families native to those two cities in interviews and special reports of Group W correspondents dispatched to upstate New York and later Washington, D.C., to focus on the sidebars of specific interest to Pittsburgh and Baltimore;

— provided pre- and post-Super Bowl game material from New Orleans to KPIX-TV San Francisco and KYW-TV Philadelphia, which gave these stations a leg up on their competitors;

— covered the Martin Luther King March by featuring interviews with people from the Group W cities who trekked to Washington to take part in the event.

"Our 'Newsfeed' is specifically set up not to cover national stories the way the three networks do," says Sabreen. Each network, he continues, does a wrapup kind of report that will be adaptable to the needs of every one of its 200-plus affiliates. Group W, by contrast, can skirt the periphery of a national story and go after something parochial.

"Newsfeed," which began Jan. 12, is transmitted by satellite from Philadelphia to all the Group W tv stations except WPQC-TV Charlotte (which comes on line later this year when its satellite facilities are installed) each day from 4 to 5 p.m. via Westar II.

The first 15 or 20 minutes of the "Newsfeed" hour are given over to Washington-bureau material and then reports from each of the five stations are sent out sequentially, starting with pieces from Boston and concluding with dispatches from San Francisco. The executive producer is Anita Klever, a producer of public-affairs programs for KYW-TV Philadelphia.

Lawrence P. Fraiberg, president of the Group W stations, putting the company's commitment to "Newsfeed" in a broader focus, says, "Localism is where the future of a television station lies. A station will enhance its image and posture by coming up with a service to its community."

With the satellite facilities now in place, Fraiberg says the next step, once the wrinkles are ironed out of the "Newsfeed" service, could be live, exclusive coverage of cultural events or of Group W-originated public-issue debates.

"I don't even rule out future syndication of 'Newsfeed' to other markets," he adds, "although right now we've got a lot of shaking down and refining to do before we can get to that point."

Foreman Exits ABC Radio

Richard A. Foreman has resigned as v.p. of programming for ABC Radio Network to start his own radio programming consultancy — Richard A. Foreman Associates. His first client will be the FM stations of Southern Broadcasting. Foreman had been with ABC since 1978.

Row Over Cornrows

San Francisco, Feb. 3. Reporter Dorothy Reed of ABC's KGO-TV here was suspended indefinitely last Monday (26) for refusing to re-style her cornrow hairdo.

Reed, 31, called the suspension "ridiculous, absurd. This hairstyle gives me a tremendous amount of pride and reflects my (black) heritage. When Bo Derek wears cornrows, she's just being fashionable and chic. But when a black woman does it, it takes on added significance," Reed said.

Station news director Joe Barnes told other reporters that they must discuss any "abrupt changes of appearance" with management. He termed the cornrows "inappropriate" for television and insisted that his suspension of Reed carried no racial overtones.

KSD Axes All-News For New C&W Air; Pink Slips Fly Fast

By JOE POLLACK

St. Louis, Feb. 3. KSD radio dropped its all-news operation and switched to a "modern country music" format, effective Sunday (1), and pinkslipped 25 of the 31 on-air news reporters, writers and producers hired in recent months.

KSD and sister station KSD-FM are owned by the Gannett Co. media conglomerate. The FMer will continue to air adult-contemporary music, according to general manager Wally Clark, who said the elimination of the all-news AM operation "is one of the most difficult announcements I have ever made."

The decision to abandon the all-news format — which started up in August '79 — took the St. Louis broadcast community by surprise and yet was not entirely unexpected since the latest ratings left no doubt that KSD was making little headway against its primary target, KMOX radio's all-talk news shows.

The Arbitron "book" for the Oct. 23-Nov. 19 period posted a 23.4 share of the total audience for KMOX, with KSD way down the list with a 2.5.

And it's no coincidence that the Gannett company and Clark opted for the country sound. WIL-AM-FM are the only full-blown country stations in the St. Louis market, and the FMer pulled a sizable 8.7 share — up from last year's 5.8 for comparable period — while the AM outlet's reading was 3.5.

Clark said Walt Turner will be KSD's new operations manager, replacing Mike Anthony. Turner was with WIL for eight years and had recently accepted a job with WBAP Dallas, but scurried back to St. Louis to grab the KSD offer.

Meanwhile, the KSD newsroom and studio was gloomsville after the axing of the all-news operation. The station had hired many prime radio news people to flesh out the staff for that now-failed format, including a member who once worked for KMOX.

A typical staff reaction: "There has been apprehension (since) the ratings came out, and the staff feels that the all-news format should have been given more time."

Robert Hart To Retire

Denver, Feb. 3. Robert A. Hart Jr., McGraw-Hill Broadcasting vicepresident and general manager of KMGH-TV Denver, plans to take early retirement on March 1, after 32 years in Denver broadcasting, 26 with KMGH-TV. A successor has not yet been named.

KYW-TV Shuffles; A Real Eye-Opener: Newscast At 6 A.M.

Philadelphia, Feb. 3.

As part of a massive overhauling of its a.m. schedule Feb. 23, Group W's KYW-TV is inaugurating the area's first-ever 6:30 a.m. newscast.

Other changes being engineered by Pat Polillo, who recently succeeded Tom Battista as vicepresident, include a noontime newscast, scuttling of Battista's innovative 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. "AM/PM," establishment of a new morning talkshow and rescheduling of Group W's "Hour Magazine."

The early-morning "3 Today," preceding NBC's "Today," will be anchored by Dave Stanley, who was hired four months ago by Battista and by former news director Carolyn Wean, recently replaced by Peter Jacobus, as a reporter and anchor for local "Today" inserts. Stanley will also be paired with Beverly Williams at noon.

Maurice Povitch, who hosted "AM/PM," will front the new 10 a.m. "People Are Talking." Interviews and studio and home audience participation during the hour will be augmented by distaff-directed data via Steve Baskerville.

"Hour Magazine," currently 10:30-11:30 a.m., will move to 3 p.m., ousting NBC's "Texas." The reshuffling will restore to the station's schedule "Wheel of Fortune," "Password Plus" and "The Doctors." The soap has been airing on WPHL-TV on one-week delay.

Up for indie grabs are NBC's "Texas," "Las Vegas Gambit," "Blockbusters" and "Card Sharks." WPHL-TV, the net's alternate affiliate, has indicated it will bid for at least one.

Shamrock TV Sales Formed By T-L Exec

Robert J. Peyton has formed his own company called Shamrock Television Sales Inc. and begun marketing a number of programs, among them:

— "Best Boy," the Academy Award-winning (1980) documentary about the life of a retarded man;

— "Jan & Dean in the Bahamas," a 60-minute musical-variety special;

— five 90-minute concerts featuring the Vienna Symphony Orchestra;

— two theatrical features, "The Treasure Seekers," with Rod Taylor and Stuart Whitman, and "Pacific Inferno," with Jim Brown;

— "The Pathfinders," a 13-part British miniseries about the exploits of the R.A.F.;

— 12 movies from the British "Carry On..." ribald comedy series; and

— "Songs of Ireland," two half-hour musical specials, and "Images of Ireland," a documentary hour.

Peyton is the former v.p. and g.m. of syndication for Time-Life Television and former head of programming for the Katz Agency.

Barron Quits Over 'Space Invader'

St. Paul, Feb. 3.

One of the most renowned creators of radio documentaries in the nation, 34-year-old Greg Barron, with Minnesota Public Radio for eight years and recipient of two Peabody Awards and numerous honors from the Corp. for Public Broadcasting for his work, didn't move his car quite fast enough to please his boss and was reprimanded for it — so he quit.

Assigned a reserved parking spot in MPR's spanking-new offices in downtown St. Paul, Barron arrived one afternoon to do a story that was to air an hour later on National Public Radio's "All Things Considered," but another car was in his spot. As is the custom, Barron parked behind the offending auto, blocking in the interloper, and went in to work.

What he didn't know was that the car belonged to a visiting MPR board member, until there was a call from the receptionist. Barron asked for time to complete his feature. After another call, Barron gave up the keys to another employee, who moved the blocking auto, and the board member was freed.

The blockage was said to be angry, and so was MPR prez William Kling. Barron, when told his conduct was unbecoming and he'd be suspended five days without pay, resigned on the spot.

WBBM-TV Has News Draw On Chi Non-Watchers Who Tune In

Chicago, Feb. 3.

Clearing The Airwaves On Hot Charlotte Gabber

Dick Pomerantz, who recently anklebated WSOE Radio in Charlotte for KSTP St. Paul, Minn., says the circumstances under which he left as host of the hottest radio talkshow in town needs to be straightened out (Variety, Jan. 21).

Pomerantz said he left the Charlotte station not just to be near his parents in Montreal, as important as that is to him, but because he could not settle on a contract with WSOE. While Pomerantz later joined KSTP, he left North Carolina without having signed a contract with either station.

Southern Baptists Plan \$20-Mil Web, Via Low-Power TV

Greensboro, N.C., Feb. 3.

Southern Baptists plan a \$20,000,000 entry into the religious broadcasting business with one of 100 proposed low-power tv stations to be based in the Greensboro area.

The Greensboro station and others in North Carolina will be linked by satellite with the Southern Baptist Radio and Television Commission based in Fort Worth, Texas, according to applications that have been filed with the FCC.

Commission spokesman said the network will produce but does not plan "preaching" or fundraising children's shows, dramas, sports and films on mission campaigns similar to other religious programming.

Commission officials say the network is part of an electronic missionary effort, but some North Carolina Baptists said they think it is too expensive and the money should go to more traditional missionary work.

Low-Power Stations Eyed

The commission also plans to use low-power stations in the state's other major tv markets: Charlotte, Raleigh-Durham and the Greenville-New Bern-Washington area. While the stations would be limited to a 10-mile broadcast range, the signal could be picked up by cable tv systems to expand the broadcast areas.

Dr. Jimmy Allen of Fort Worth, the tv commission's president, is trying to raise \$20,000,000 by March 1 to begin construction of the stations. Donations already include

At 10 p.m. every Monday through Sunday, 200,000 adult Chicagoans who are not watching network prime-time turn on the set to watch the local news on the three Windy City o's.

WLS-TV, the ABC outlet long thought of as a blue-collar information source, actually has its strongest news-time lead in the middle-class outlying suburbs.

WBBM-TV, the CBS o'so considered to have an upscale profile, has a distinctly higher proportion of Chi's wealthy in its audience — and probably a higher proportion of the poor.

There is a massive turnover and exchange of viewing audience between 4 and 5 p.m. when the news starts — new viewers tuning in, viewers abandoning the set and many other viewers changing stations.

These are a few of the gems that can be gleaned from the subterranean statistical war that goes on between stations in Chi as it does in other major markets. The result is a continuing cannonade of in-house research, some of it not intended for competitors eyes but a lot of it passed on by salesmen as favorable news.

Altering Agency Perceptions

Much of this feverish search for favorable stats has to do with an attempt to change ad agency perceptions of the Chi network-owned stations, perceptions formed many years ago and then possibly erroneously.

The locus of WBBM-TV's very proper newscast was also assumed to be in the tiny northern suburbs, but it turns out that the station's real muscle is in the city proper — a 33% share.

WBBM-TV's research response is that there are a lot of well-off people in the city and WBBM-TV has them. In the eight most affluent ZIP-code areas in the city, WBBM-TV has 43.2% of the households with incomes between \$24,000 and \$37,900 in the late news and 41% of those upscale households in the early news.

On the other hand, WLS-TV, whose casual news usually identified the station with the inner-city industrial worker, actually hits its viewing stride in such distant commuter counties as Kane and Will.

WMAQ-TV, the NBC station, generally follows WLS-TV's county circulation pattern, with its highest share (24%) in Kane County. In the upper income ZIP-code areas in Chicago, WMAQ-TV has a slight household advantage over WLS-TV

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